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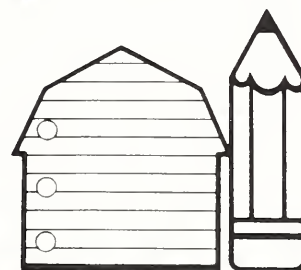


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## Ag in the Classroom

# Notes

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture



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A bi-monthly newsletter for the Agriculture in the Classroom program. Sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to help students understand the important role of agriculture in the United States economy. For information, contact: Shirley Traxler, Director, Room 234-W, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. 202/447-5727

## Check Out The National Agricultural Library (Your AITC Materials May Be "Overdue")

It has the distinction of being one of the three national libraries in the United States, and the largest agricultural library in the free world. Because it retains the most extensive collection available, it is also known as "the library of last resort" to researchers in the field.

The National Agricultural Library (NAL) in Beltsville, Maryland, was established in 1862 as USDA's departmental library. A century later, it

became one of the country's three national libraries, an honor it shares with the Library of Congress and the National Library of Medicine. NAL is home to 1.9 million volumes of agricultural research and scientific data.

NAL acquires materials from sources worldwide. More than 60 percent of its materials originate in foreign countries. Although the library began as a

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The National Agricultural Library retains the most extensive collection of agricultural materials in the world. Director Joseph Howard encourages all states to continue donating Ag in the Classroom resources to the library's new AITC collection.



## From the Director

Dear Readers:

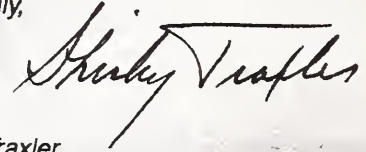
*As part of our observance of the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution, Ag in the Classroom Notes will be featuring articles which review American agriculture in 1787, the year the Constitution was signed.*

*In this issue, the feature George Washington and Thomas Jefferson As Farmers, offers intriguing insight to the agricultural backgrounds of our nation's past presidents. Many of you may want to incorporate this story into a*

*history lesson, or offer it to students as background material for research papers.*

*Future issues of Notes will include articles about farming methods, foods and recipes, agricultural trade, womens roles and other interesting facts about early American agriculture. I hope you enjoy reading and sharing these bicentennial features!*

Yours truly,



Shirley Traxler

## 500 New Hampshire Students "Attend" University

"They loved it, the teachers loved it, and we had a good time doing it," said Sue Robertson, AITC state contact for New Hampshire, where 500 fourth graders saw the inner workings of a farm at the University of New Hampshire this past June.

Several organizations worked together to sponsor a three-day event that allowed school children in Strafford and Rockingham counties to experience agriculture first-hand. Teachers in the participating counties were provided with information kits beforehand to prepare their classes for the field trip. As students got off the bus, they were given questionnaires pertaining to the farm and were told to look for the answers throughout the day.

The students toured the university's greenhouses and fields, and saw the Purple Lilac, the New Hampshire state flower they had learned about in history class. Horse-shoeing and sheep-

shearing were demonstrated for the students, and horses, cows, chickens, pigs, sheep, ducks, rabbits and goats greeted them in the animal tent. Antique farm tools where on display.

Visitors received a milkshake while on the farm, as well as a more memorable souvenir. "Everybody went home with a giant field-pumpkin plant," reported Bill Annis, a university professor and a member of the AITC state committee. Field-pumpkins can grow as big as 20 feet in diameter. "So you know they'll remember their trip to the university!"

Sponsors of the farm visit included the New Hampshire Farm Bureau, the University of New Hampshire, Granite State Milk Promotion, Strafford County Farm Bureau and the New Hampshire Farm Museum.

"It really was a good thing for the kids," said Annis.

A New Hampshire fourth-grader horses around with a new friend during a farm visit at the University of New Hampshire.





"It's beginning to take off like wild fire!" reports Kelvin Robinson, chairman of Florida Ag in the Classroom, Inc. (FAITC). "I'm looking forward to coming to the national conference and saying, 'Hey, look what we've been able to do!'"

With the corporation barely a year old, FAITC is off to a running start, and Robinson's infectious enthusiasm no doubt plays an important part.

FAITC's current project involves compiling Florida's own resource guide of AITC materials. To complete this project, Robinson is establishing AITC Coordinating Committees in each of Florida's 67 counties. Each committee will be composed of the chairman of the school board, the superintendent of schools, the superintendent of instructional services, an Extension Service representative from a Land-Grant institution, and representatives from

the Soil Conservation Service, 4-H, and the Farm Bureau. Other groups will be represented on the boards as appropriate.

The State Department of Education has sent a letter to every school district informing them of the project. Robinson works with the Farm Bureaus in each county to set up the initial meeting; the counties take it from there. "We are here solely for the purpose of coordination," Robinson says. Thus far, six counties have formed committees. "We're getting just great support from all over," Robinson reports.

In other activities, the University of Florida has agreed to plan a unit on teacher training and curriculum development, a project Robinson expects to start within a year. In November, FAITC will also sponsor its first annual conference.



Adoption of a resolution supporting the Florida Ag in the Classroom program was the first official act of the Florida Cabinet, presided over by the then newly inaugurated Governor Bob Martinez on January 13, 1987. Members of the cabinet are (from left): Doyle Conner, Commissioner of Agriculture; George Firestone, former Secretary of State; Gerald Lewis, Comptroller; Governor Martinez, shaking hands with John King, member of the FAITC Board of Directors; Robert Butterworth, Attorney General; Bill Gunter, Commissioner of Insurance; Betty Caster, Commissioner of Education.

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repository for scientific data, it has been expanded in the last 15 years to include information on such topics as nutrition, economics, aquaculture, and rural development.

A recent addition to NAL is the National Ag in the Classroom collection. "NAL is delighted to work with Ag in the Classroom," says Joseph Howard, director of NAL. "While we hope the cooperation is mutually beneficial, NAL benefits greatly by getting important material in its collection, where it can be categorized and made available to anyone in the nation who has a need."

The collection contains educational material donated by state AITC groups, as well as materials listed in USDA's *Resource Guide to Educational Materials About Agriculture*.

Susan Fugate, coordinator of the collection, calls the 150 items received thus far "impressive." Fugate urges those who have not yet contributed

their materials to do so. She says that all forms of AITC materials are welcome in the collection—there is even room for ag treasure chests!

The AITC collection is being indexed into the AGRICultural OnLine Access database, or AGRICOLA. From the Latin word for "farmer," AGRICOLA is a database that permits subscribers to search NAL's bibliography by computer. AGRICOLA lists all NAL books, articles, papers, software, audio-visual materials and patents. It also lists and locates materials that are not part of the NAL collection. Now, libraries, teachers or anyone who subscribes to the program can see a listing of NAL's AITC collection.

To donate AITC materials to the NAL collection, send them to Susan Fugate, AITC Collection Coordinator, National Agricultural Library, Room 002, Beltsville, Maryland, 20705.



## "Ag"gressive Fundraising Helps Foster New Programs

It started as a simple request. In 1980, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) had asked the California Farm Bureau Federation to educate its students and teachers on the importance of agriculture.

A partnership quickly developed between the SFUSD and the Farm Bureau. Teacher workshops, student farm trips, farm days in the city, and similar ag-ed programs caught on—and rapidly spread—throughout the state. But so did the need to fund these activities.

Enter the California Foundation For Agriculture in the Classroom.

the Farm Bureau's annual Summer Agriculture Institute, an intensive training program that enables 30 teachers to visit farms and learn about agricultural issues. Other programs supported by the foundation focus on student projects and classroom resource materials.

And it's all due to smart fundraising techniques.

Mark Linder, executive director of the foundation, says individuals and organizations alike have responded to his group's fundraising campaign. "In the first few months of our fundraising efforts, nearly \$30,000 has been contributed," he says. "We're encouraged and pleased with this response."

According to Linder, the foundation raises funds via four proven techniques. Publicity, direct mail campaigns, advertisements in education and agricultural publications, and direct solicitation of private, public and corporate support have created a "synergistic effect" on the fundraising program. It is the combination of these four fundraising activities that creates the effect: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The foundation's communication efforts center around a consistent theme, "Hands On Agriculture." Advertisements, a newsletter and direct mail brochures display this theme, which is often accompanied by pictures of children petting farm animals. All materials remind readers of the foundation's important mission and past accomplishments, and solicit contributions with clip-out coupons.

However, Linder believes the foundation's successful fundraising efforts are due to more than a well-planned communication strategy. He credits the wisdom of the contributors. "The sponsors recognize the tie between agricultural awareness and the industry's survival. They realize that agriculture cannot endure without the understanding and support of urban residents, and that their contributions to the Foundation will work toward establishing that understanding."



### California Foundation For Agriculture In The Classroom

The foundation, a non-profit corporation, promotes the education of students and teachers about agriculture's importance by awarding grants to individuals, schools and organizations involved in projects that teach about agriculture.

One of the activities funded by the foundation, is

## *Teaching the Economics of the Food and Fiber System*

Copies of *Teaching the Economics of the Food and Fiber System*, an interdisciplinary guide designed to help teachers integrate economics into their established curricula, are now available through the Joint Council on Economic Education. (See July Ag in the Classroom Notes)

Three separate editions of the guide, Grades K-3 (No. 904), Grades 4-6 (No. 903), and Secondary (No. 902), can be ordered at \$35 each from

the JCEE. Shipping and handling charges are an additional 10% for orders up to \$100.00, and an additional 8% for orders over \$100.00.

To place your order, make all checks and money orders payable to the JCEE and send your request to:

The Joint Council on Economic Education  
2 Park Avenue New York, NY 10016



# Illinois Volunteers Get "Fired Up" For School Year

SEPT/OCT. 1987

Thanks to a recent workshop sponsored by Illinois' Agricultural Basics in Education (ABE) group, Ag in the Classroom volunteers now have a year's worth of inspiration, ideas and information to share with students across the state.

Volunteers spent a full day sharpening their teaching skills. The volunteers also explored new ways to work with fellow educators and school systems, participated in a lively idea-exchange session, and reviewed ways to incorporate public relations into their volunteer efforts.

Sally Brooks, vice president of ABE, says the workshop was the group's first statewide gathering of its kind. "We've been talking about such a session for some time. It was really a great opportunity for volunteers to pick up ideas, share their successes and get fired up for the coming school year."

And "fired up" they became, especially after listening to guest speaker Erma Maust. A farmer, writer and photographer from Bayport, Michigan, Maust serves on the national education committee of the National Live Stock and Meat Board.

A devoted agriculture volunteer, Maust conducts

tours of her farm every day for three months a year. "This summer 3,500 children visited my farm," Maust says. "I've been doing this for 24 years, and every day gets more exciting."

In addition to hayrides and games, Maust's tour is full of educational activities. "We usually do everything in a big circle. When I show children how to milk a goat, I act like I don't know how, and I ask the children for advice. You should see how big their eyes get when the first squirt of milk comes out!"

Maust believes in this kind of "hands on" education. "We cannot teach boys and girls about agriculture until they've been to a farm. Teachers tell me that children have many, many experiences to write about after they visit."

Maust told the workshop attendees about the kind of feedback to expect from volunteer work. "Children in stores recognize me and describe their farm visits in detail. Even years after their visits, they can remember everything. It's a once in a lifetime experience for these children, and a very enjoyable experience for me, too."



With the help of a John Deere tractor, Ag volunteer Erma Maust leads the way during one of her popular farm tours. This past summer, thousands of students, from kindergarten through college, visited her Michigan farm.

## Twenty-First Century Explorers A Video Tour of High-Tech Agriculture

*Twenty-first Century Explorers* may sound like a science fiction film, but when it makes its debut in junior high classes this fall, students will discover high tech agriculture.

Made for National Science and Technology Week by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the 20-minute videotape illustrates that agriculture is not just growing crops or raising animals, but a highly sophisticated industry which has evolved through the application of science and technology.

By showing science and scientists at work, the videotape also introduces students to the wide variety of career opportunities in agricultural science. "We're trying to broaden their horizons about

agriculture," explained Dr. Donald Hegwood, a member of the National Science and Technology Week Task Force at USDA.

The videotape features scientists at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center in Beltsville, Maryland. The scientists explain to students the various aspects of their work, and how agricultural science and technology have paved the way toward important discoveries—many extending into applications outside the realm of agriculture.

For example, cotton sprayed with a substance developed by USDA scientists becomes a fire-resistant material used for children's pajamas. The

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cloning of peach trees to develop a disease-resistant strain introduces the student to the fascinating field of biotechnology. Satellites collect information that helps scientists study soil erosion and the effects of pollution. Robots perform simple, repetitious tasks so humans are free for more sophisticated work. "Scientific research like this is proof that our study of agriculture has done more than just grow food," says the narrator.

The instructor's guide that accompanies the videotape contains a lesson plan, student activity sheet and glossary of terms. Short biographies of the participating agricultural scientists are also

included in the section titled "Exploring Careers."

"I originally had absolutely no interest in science," explains laboratory technician Brenda Collins in the videotape. "I was intimidated by math and I was intimidated by my image of science. When I got to college, I realized this was not an accurate attitude for me to have. My basic interest was in dealing with people and being a humanitarian. What is more fundamental than feeding the world?"

The *Twenty-first Century Explorers* videotape and instructor's guide are available through The Dub Center, 51 New Plant Court, Owings Mill, Maryland, 21117. Cost, including shipping, is \$21.88.

## Agriculture and the Constitution

### George Washington and Thomas Jefferson As Farmers



When the U.S. Constitution was written in 1787, 90 percent of the population lived on farms. Not surprisingly, two of the most important political figures of that age—George Washington and Thomas Jefferson—were leading agriculturists.

George Washington, president of the Constitutional Convention, used his Mount Vernon plantation as an experimental farm for trying out new agricultural ideas. Thomas Jefferson, whose political philosophy influenced the Convention, pioneered the use of new crops and farming techniques. The two Virginians often wrote each other about farm problems and kept in touch with European agricultural reformers.

George Washington grew up in tidewater Virginia and lived the life of a southern planter, except for his early experience as a surveyor and his later military service. By any standards, Washington was a large landowner. He amassed nearly 70,000 acres, most of which was in the undeveloped West. Mount Vernon, his home, contained some 8,000 acres divided into five parts and farmed by about 100 slaves.

After moving to Mount Vernon in 1759, Washington began to grow tobacco as a cash crop like other tidewater planters. But he did not prosper as a planter; his soil had been badly depleted by continued tobacco production. He also disliked his dependence on British merchants. So in the mid 1760's, he became one of the first planters in his area to diversify. He planted wheat and corn, raised sheep for wool, grew clovers and grasses to replenish the soil and feed his livestock, and operated a local grist mill. Diversification enabled him to rotate crops and rebuild soil fertility.

Washington's zeal for improving his farm led him to try a number of experiments. He spent years searching for a good natural fertilizer and planting test crops in different soils under controlled conditions. When possible, he had mud dragged from the Potomac and put on his fields. As one visitor commented, the regular toast at Mount Vernon was "Success to the mud!"

To stop soil erosion, Washington had drainage ditches dug, but with little success. He also worked to develop an improved plow and better strains of wheat. Perhaps his greatest success was in introducing the mule to America, which he did after a gift of a prize jackass from the king of Spain.

Washington kept careful records of his farm work. During his many absences, he sent back detailed instructions to his overseers and had them make regular reports. He often exchanged information on farming with the leading agrarian thinkers of the age, such as Arthur Young in England. He also belonged to one of the first American agricultural societies, the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of Agriculture.

In the end, none of these efforts made Mount Vernon profitable. Infertile soil, inefficient slave labor, and poor farm management while he was away combined to keep Washington on the verge of debt. But Washington's willingness to experiment had an influence on later American agriculture. And his devotion to agricultural improvement made him the first President to recommend a federal office on agriculture—an idea that came to fruition in 1862 as the U.S. Department of Agriculture. At his death in 1799, he left another forward-looking legacy—he emancipated his slaves.

Thomas Jefferson had even more scientific curiosity about agriculture than Washington, and he had the opportunity to see other agricultural systems first-hand. Jefferson's wide interests made him curious about almost every aspect of agriculture. Though a planter like Washington, he grew up farther west in Virginia in an area close to the frontier. This environment, more democratic than Washington's, no doubt influenced his political philosophy and strengthened his view that economically independent farmers were essential for a democratic government.

Jefferson farmed about 2,000 acres with as many as 200 slaves near his mountaintop home,

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# Spotlight

## Cathy Littlepage Makes a Big Difference

When Louisiana teacher Cathy Littlepage sets a goal, she means business. That's why Littlepage has managed, in less than one year, to introduce the concept of Ag in the Classroom to every parish in Louisiana.

A high school science and agriculture teacher, Littlepage spares no enthusiasm when trying to get students and teachers interested in learning about agriculture. "When our Chairperson of the Ag in the Classroom Task Force returned from the national conference in '86 with all the latest resources, I was very impressed. I immediately jumped on the bandwagon to help spread the word," she explains.

Early goal-setting, according to Barbara Ruth, Louisiana contact for Ag in the Classroom, was the key to success. "We decided to present the Ag in the Classroom program to as many teachers and educators as possible. So far we have reached the Louisiana Association of Educators, the Louisiana Vocational Agriculture Teachers and the Louisiana Vocational Association," Ruth said.

The Louisiana group opted to exhibit at several well-attended meetings, ensuring rapid dissemination and high visibility for their message. "We set up a booth with the Farm and Food Bytes program at the Louisiana Association of Educators convention. We hit close to 2,000 educators at one time," Littlepage recalls. "This past summer, I took the same program to the state FFA convention. I set up the computer in the lobby, and students got hands-on practice. They chose to have a competition with the segment 'Can You Make Money Farming?' You could hear them buzzing with enthusiasm. Teachers at the convention saw the

students' reaction and ordered Farm and Food Bytes on the spot."

Littlepage has also managed to secure administrative support from the state's commissioner of agriculture, and she has helped to set up networks between teachers, educators and the farming community.

No matter where Littlepage's successful ag campaign takes her, the message is the same. "My biggest point is that we can't afford to raise another generation of children who are agriculturally illiterate. We must reach people who aren't learning about agriculture—whether they be rural or urban. Everyone needs a basic understanding of agriculture.

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"... we can't afford to raise another generation of children who are agriculturally illiterate."

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"At a leadership class this past summer," she recalls, "we had students work on an assignment: 'How can we teach other children about agriculture?' They caught on quickly. Their first idea was to show others where food comes from. The fact that 13- to 15-year olds see the need to teach younger children about agriculture was significant to me."

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Monticello. Like Mount Vernon, Jefferson's farming operations improved when he was present and languished during his absences.

Jefferson had a ceaseless interest in trying out new crops and used his travels to Europe to acquire seeds and plant specimens. He experimented with new varieties of corn, barley, peas, and clover and eagerly planted seeds sent back by Lewis and Clark from their western explorations in 1804-1806. His love of fine European wines led to repeated but unsuccessful attempts to establish European grape varieties in Virginia, something that has only been done successfully in the past few years.

While Washington liked to tinker with machines, for Jefferson it was a passion. He invented new

versions of the grain drill, corn cob crusher, and corn sheller. Most importantly, he devised a way of cutting the moldboard of a plow so any country craftsman could duplicate his superior design exactly. None of these inventions was widely used, but Jefferson's plow won enough scientific praise to win a prestigious French award.

Like Washington, Jefferson's most lasting contributions to agriculture were probably in the realm of policy. Serving on the committees that drafted the land ordinances of 1784 and 1785, he helped fashion the policy by which America's vast public domain would be sold to farmers. He was also an early proponent of agricultural education in colleges and proposed a plan by which country agricultural improvement societies could exchange ideas and information.



# Ag in the Classroom — State Contacts

The individuals listed here are key reference persons in each state. If you have any questions, want to make reports, or need more information about your state's Ag in the Classroom program, contact the following:

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